

Annual Newsletter 2026

Friends of
Luton Parish
Church

Dates for your diary

Annual General Meeting Tuesday 14th April 2026 - 6pm

All Friends of Luton Parish Church are warmly invited to attend the AGM of the Friends at 6pm on Tuesday 14th April 2026. **This will be held at the church.**



Annual Concert Friday 3rd July 2026 at 7pm

The fabulous team from Luton Music Service return with a stunning programme from the Concert Band, the Chamber Strings, the Youth Orchestra and Training Orchestra, and the Senior Strings. There is no charge for admission, but a collection is taken at the end in aid of the Friends of Luton Parish Church, and interval refreshments are served in the hall.

Annual Service Sunday 27th September 2026 at 9am

A service of thanksgiving for the work of the Friends of Luton Parish Church. We are very excited to welcome Dr Louise Hampson as our guest speaker. Louise is the Deputy Director of the Centre for Christianity and Culture at York University and is helping lead the church through a multi-phase development programme as we adapt to our new surroundings with the huge Power Court development. Stay on after the service for a historical tour of Luton's medieval jewel by our resident expert Peter Adams.



From our Treasurer John Spurgeon

We would love to welcome you on board as a subscriber - as little as £12pa for an individual or £20 for a couple/family (but we hope you will want to give more!).

Ways of doing this are:

Standing Order - You give instructions to your bank for a regular gift (download our leaflet from our website for a suitable form). Friends of Luton Parish Church, Sort code 20-53-97, Account number 90358223

Gift Aid - If you are a UK taxpayer we can benefit by boosting your gift by 25% at no extra cost to yourself

Give.net (Stewardship) - They deal with all the tax issues themselves! Visit give.net or visit our website: www.friendsoflutonparishchurch.org/help/ (for single or regular gift): "How can you help>Donate/raise funds.

Help us to be able to face the challenges of maintaining this beautiful building in the middle of our town! Thank you.

Friends of Luton Parish Church Trustees



Nic Pestell
Chair



Nicki Denton-Masih
Secretary



John Spurgeon
Treasurer



Andrew Beale
Communications

Interview by Andrew Beale with Alan Smith, First Church Estates Commissioner.



Responsible for a multi-billion portfolio on behalf of the Church of England, and speaker at the 2025 Annual Service.

Alan, thank you so much for visiting us in Luton, and for speaking so powerfully at our 2025 Friends Annual Service. Please could you kindly introduce yourself, tell us where you are from originally and a bit about your journey to such an important role for the Church of England ?

I like to define myself and tell my life story by 6 Bs. The Bahamas - where I was born. Barbados - where I grew up from a few months until the age of 23. British which I now am and was at birth. Black - the box I tick, although if you do my DNA test its almost certain to be more complex! A Banker - I worked for HSBC for 27 years. A Brother - In Christ. My faith is central to my life; the combination of those experiences has led me to this wonderful role of First Church Estates Commissioner that I have the privilege of doing since October 2021.

St Mary's Church in Luton is a member of the Major Churches Network (MCN) and had a visit recently from its Chair, Adrian Daffern. We also attended the aptly named "Pretty and Gritty" MCN conference in Sunderland and Hexham in September 2025.

What do you see are the main issues for a large city centre church like St Mary's in a very multi-cultural and working class town like Luton in the 21st century ?

"Pretty and Gritty" sums up what it means to be alive and be wonderfully made in God's Image. St Mary's Luton is both a building and a place which allows life to breath. St Mary's Luton is one of the most exciting church spaces that I have visited - to see a 900 year old building that still enables mission in such a powerful way in the present is a testimony and reminder that we serve a God that never changes, and also that He does that through people who are faithful through generations. That is such a wonderful legacy that St Mary must continue to steward well. In addition, St Mary's given its position and relationships in Luton, is at the front line in grappling with several of the forces that are changing community, country, church, and civilisation. That brings complexities and challenges but also provides a major opportunity through its ministry for St Mary's Luton to help shape the better, just society and future that we seek for all.

Luton Town FC is building a huge 23,000 seat stadium on land directly adjacent to the 900-year-old St Mary's. We have excellent relations with the football club for now, but when everything is open, there will be inevitable strains. How do you think we should try and benefit from this development for the good of current and future congregations at the church ?

The proximity and relationship to where Luton FC is building its new stadium is another example of St Mary's unique location and mission and the exciting opportunities which that provides to minister in powerful, new, and distinct ways.

Sports, in particular football, in addition to providing sheer joy and excitement, is something which binds us together, builds community, and gives a sense of shared identity.

In many ways, in a more secularised society, football does some of the things that the Church is supposed to do but no longer does as effectively as it should. At the same time, there are some things that only a church can do - to help people to know God. There is a lot of exciting potential for a powerful, valuable partnership between St Mary's and Luton FC that will do tremendous good. One thing which strikes me as a distinct strength about St Mary's is its ability to manage situations where there may be potential tensions with care and wisdom so that there are good outcomes for all.

The Friends of Luton Parish Church has fundraised over £1M for the church fabric since its foundation 60 years ago. But there is a limit to what we can do. Tell us a little about the types of funding open to the church from funds under your direct or indirect control for more ambitious projects we would like to do in future ?

One area to explore is the Buildings for Mission Fund, funded by the Church Commissioners and administered by the Archbishops' Council. "Buildings for Mission" helps to fund the repair and improvement of church buildings through the dioceses, as well as to boost professional advice and grant money for rural and urban church buildings most in need. The other area is the Net Zero Carbon Programme, the exciting, pioneering programme, also funded by the Church Commissioners, which is already having a big impact in enabling churches through the unlocking of resources and capability to progress on the journey to a low carbon world. Given the innovative culture that is at the centre of the identity of St Mary's Luton, it would be exciting to explore the possibilities of the Net Zero Carbon Programme.

Wills and Legacies by Nicki Denton-Masih

For people who may find it difficult to make significant gifts to charities such as "The Friends of Luton Parish Church" during their lifetime, making this Charity a beneficiary in your Will is a way of ensuring that money which you no longer need is put to good use and, at the same time, you may reduce your estate's liability to Inheritance Tax.

Some seven out of ten adults who die in this country fail to make a Will, and if you do not make a Will, then your estate will be divided up according to how the law dictates it should, and not necessarily as you would have wished.

It is always advisable to instruct a Solicitor to make sure your Will is properly drawn up, valid and enforceable, and to ensure that your Will reflects your wishes.

If you already have a Will, it is possible to include a legacy to The Friends in your Will by having a codicil drawn up, and this is a simple and inexpensive process. If you would like to leave a legacy to The Friends of Luton Parish Church, your Solicitor might find the following wording useful: "I give to the Friends of Luton Parish Church (registered Charity Number 240750) the sum of pounds (£.....) for its general purposes".

The beautiful Friends of Luton Parish Church Christmas cards will be on sale at the back of church at just £5 per pack of five.



Nicki Denton-Masih at Machins Solicitors, Luton, would be delighted to help set up your will with a 25% discount



Email nicki.denton-masih@machins.co.uk

Contact the Friends!

You can email the team on:
friends@stmarysluton.org

Find out more on our excellent website:
www.friendsoflutonparishchurch.org

Email the individual trustees and executive committee members as follows:

Trustees Chair - Nic Pestell
nic.pestell@machins.co.uk
Communications - Andrew Beale
andrewbeale@bealeshotels.co.uk
Secretary - Nicki Denton-Masih
nicki.denton-masih@machins.co.uk
Treasurer - John Spurgeon
john.spurgeon506@btinternet.com

Join the Friends on www.give.net/20193962
Download the brochure and application form at:

www.friendsoflutonparishchurch.org/assets/files/downloads/FriendsofLutonParishChurch.pdf

Executive Committee

All the trustees plus:
Committee member - Anthony Moss
anthonymoss@stmarysluton.org
St Mary's Parish Church Vicar - Mike Jones
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